Report on the NN/LM MAR Needs Assessment of Unaffiliated Health Professionals in Nursing Homes

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Introduction:

As specified in the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) Middle Atlantic Region (MAR) *Strategic Program Plan for Member Participation* (2008), it is intended the MAR would complete a needs assessment of a specific unaffiliated health professional group in the region to determine their health information needs and to see if there are barriers to getting the information they need in a rapid and useful manner (Year 3, Outreach objective #4). The strategic plan is based on a needs assessment of the MAR network members conducted in 2007. As determined by this needs assessment, the group of unaffiliated health professionals selected by most respondents (46%) as a possible target audience for outreach activities is nursing home care organizations, e.g.: home health agencies, nursing homes, and others. This specific needs assessment of unaffiliated health professionals focuses on nursing home staff. More specifically, health professionals working in nursing homes who are not affiliated with an institution with a medical library.

The needs assessment tools included a detailed letter explaining the purpose of the assessment and a questionnaire. These tools were developed by Karen Brewer, previous Director of the NN/LM MAR who retired in December 2009, and Sue Hunter, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator for the NN/LM MAR. This needs assessment was conducted during January – May 2010. The questionnaire was brief with only seven questions which asked about the nursing home staff's access to the internet, use of quality online health information, types of online resources consulted, and the interest level in training workshops for finding and searching online health resources. The letter and questionnaire tools are included in appendix I at the end of this report.

Methodology:

A snapshot of nursing homes in the region was generated by consulting the *Nursing Home Compare* website (http://www.medicare.gov) along with the Department of Health websites for each of the four states within the MAR (Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania). These resources provide current contact information for the nursing homes within each state. At the time the search was conducted there were 1,800 nursing homes in total in the region.

To conduct this needs assessment in a timely fashion a random sample of nursing homes in the region was determined to make the assessment size more manageable. An online sample calculator was utilized to determine the sample size (Creative Research System's Sample Size Calculator, http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm#one). The questionnaire was sent to 93 nursing homes within all four states in the region. It turns out 5 of the nursing homes were

either closed or the initial mail out was returned to sender resulting in the overall sample size of n=88.

In order to administer the questionnaire to this target group correspondence was directed to the nursing home administrators since they are a known entity within the organization and they can be expected to have overall knowledge of their staff including their needs for and access to quality health information. While institutional contact information was available (address and telephone number), in three of the four states within the MAR the place of employment of nursing home administrators is proprietary information. As a result, the letter and questionnaire was simply addressed to "nursing home administrator" rather than to a specific individual. Additionally, since there was no email contact information for the institutions, or the individuals, the questionnaire was handled in a traditional print and mail format.

The questionnaire for this needs assessment was developed using SurveyMonkey which was also the software used to manually compile responses and analyze the results. Although a traditional paper questionnaire was sent to the nursing home administrators, included in the accompanying letter was a URL for the online version of the questionnaire should the respondent choose to answer electronically rather than on the paper copy.

The letter and questionnaire developed for this needs assessment was reviewed by Susan Barnes and Cindy Olney of NN/LM's Outreach Evaluation Resource Center (OERC) and their recommendations were taken into account to improve the tools. Both the letter and questionnaire were pilot tested by a nursing home administrator previously consulted on this project. The pilot tester deemed the letter and questionnaire straightforward and clearly written.

Anticipating a low response rate to this questionnaire since it was not personalized to the individual nursing home administrator, and it was expected NN/LM MAR is a largely unknown entity to the recipients a modification of Don A. Dillman's Tailored Design Method (TDM)[1] was employed using mixed modes of contact to stimulate a higher response rate. Dillman's effective mail procedure outlines a timely process for multiple contacts with respondents to encourage them to answer the questionnaire. For the MAR needs assessment of unaffiliated health professionals in nursing homes the mixed mode method of contact was as follows,

1. Mail introductory letter and questionnaire with stamped return envelope
2. Mail letter & questionnaire to non-respondents with stamped return envelope
3. FedEx final replacement questionnaire to non-respondents
4. Telephone non-respondents; resend questionnaire where requested

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[1] Dillman, D.A. 2007. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (2nd ed.) Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

The response rate to this questionnaire was 47% (41 respondents; n=88); 26 returned the completed questionnaire, 11 completed it via the telephone, and 4 online.

Needs Assessment Findings:

There was a 47% response rate to the questionnaire.

The responses from each state are as follows,

- Delaware: 4.9% (2)
- New Jersey: 14.6% (6)
- New York: 36.6% (15)
- Pennsylvania: 43.9% (18)

When asked if the nursing home staff use health information for their own work, 81% of the respondents said "yes". In the case of the nursing home staff providing health information to patients and their families, 69% of the respondents said "yes".
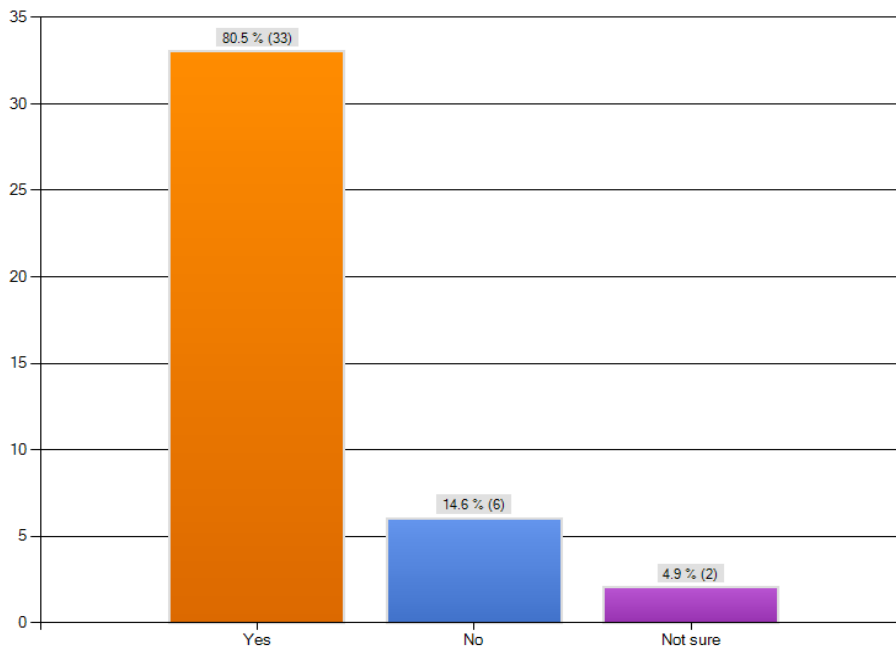
Does your staff use health information:
For their own work?
**To provide information to patients and their families?**
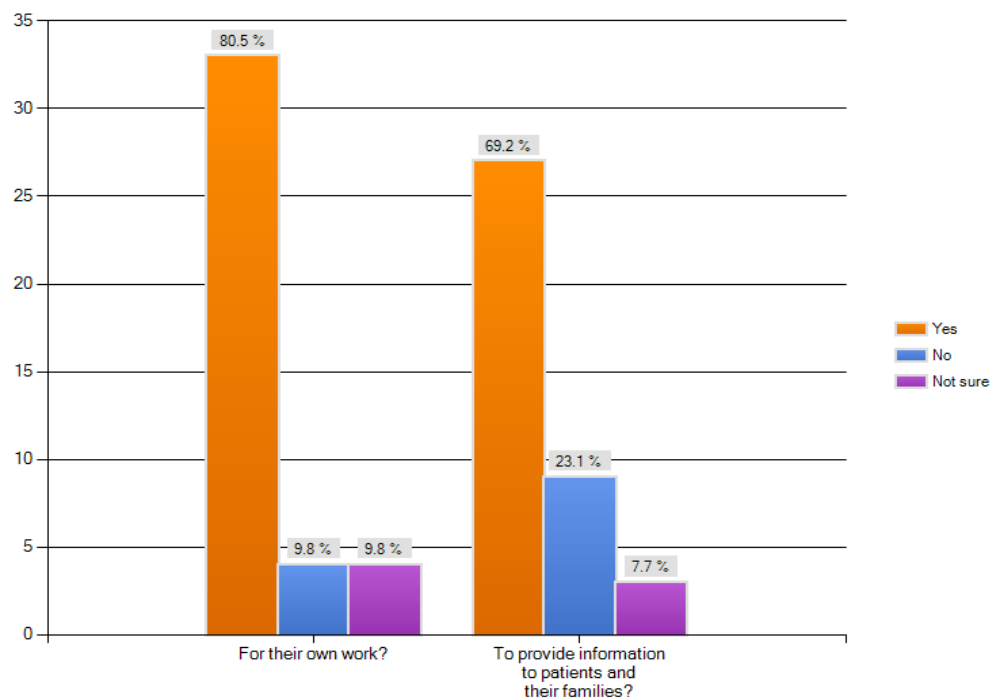
Eighty percent of the respondents said "yes" the staff has Internet access at work to search for health information. Several respondents noted that not all staff have Internet access, but selected groups such as nursing staff have access.

Does your staff have Internet access at work to search for health information?

When asked if the staff has any difficulty finding *good quality* health information, 56% of the respondents selected "not sure" as an answer.

Does your staff have any difficulty finding *good quality* health information?
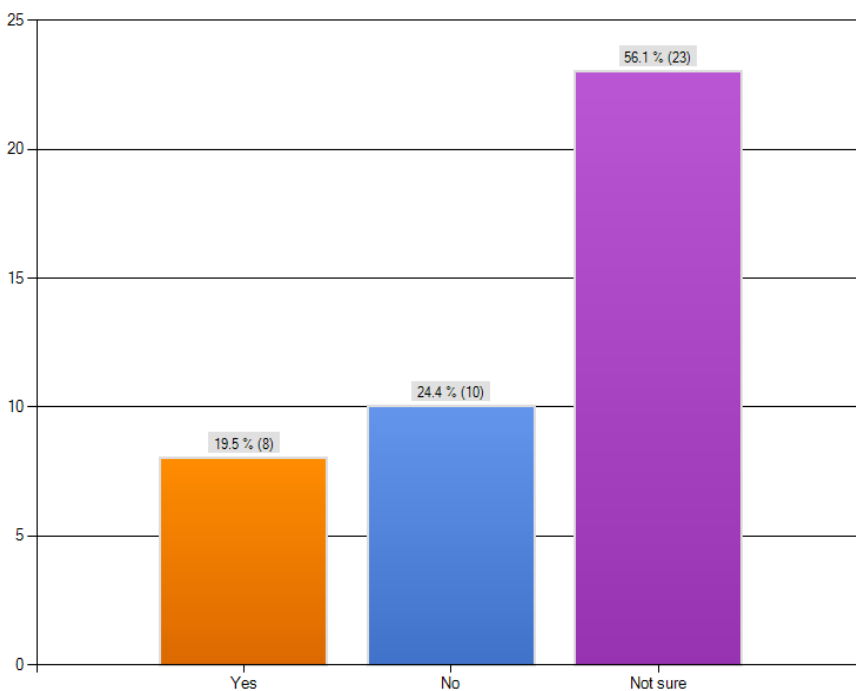
If respondents selected "yes" to the question (Does your staff have any difficulty finding *good quality* health information?) they were prompted to describe the difficulty in finding health information. Here are those responses,

- There is health information on the internet but how many are reliable sources of information?
- Can't use web - outdated infrastructure (sic)
- adequate, accurate source
- Time to search
- limited time to research
- Some sites are not easily navigated; searching can be time consuming

When asked to select from a list of health information resources which ones the staff use, Google was selected by 58% of the respondents and WebMD was selected by 43% of the respondents.

Which of the following health information resources does your staff use?
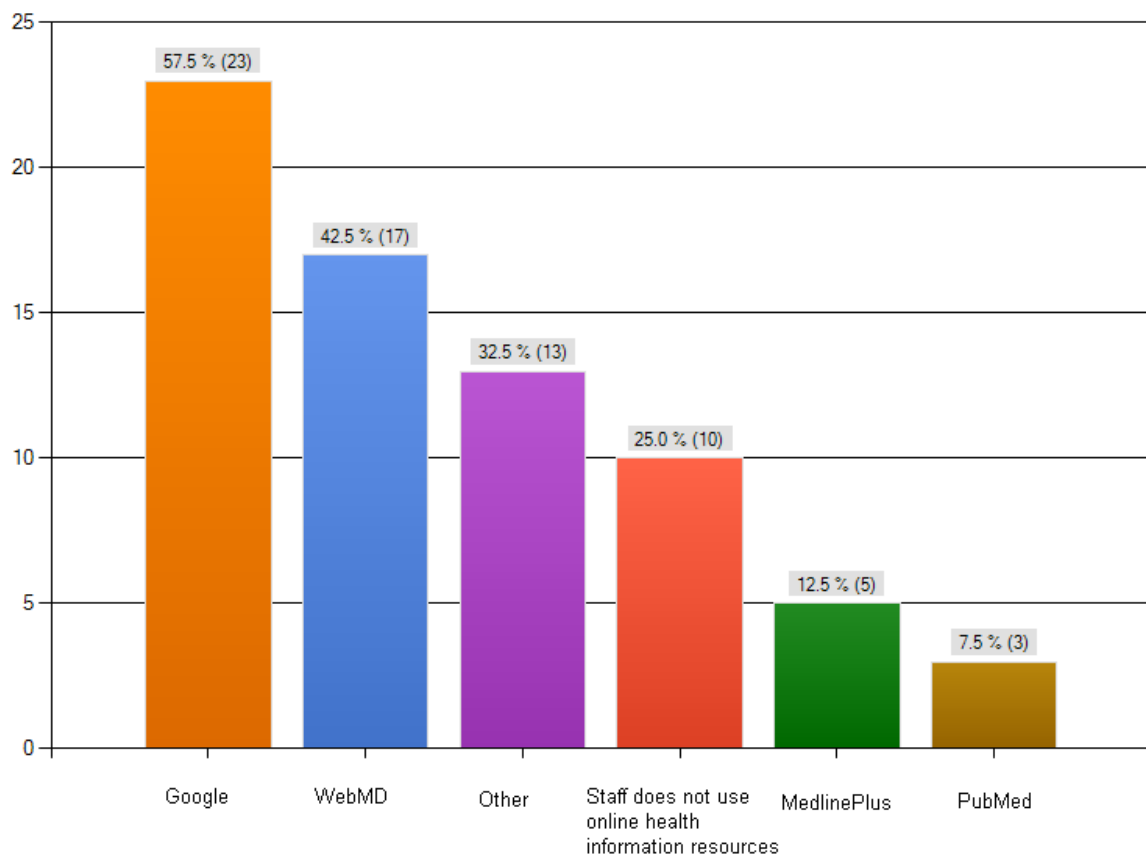
Other resources cited in the questionnaire responses include,

- Ascension Health, PA DOH, Vendor info
- They search ONLY the tools provided for by the company: Hippocretes [sic] and Care to Learn (to gain CEs). They do not have access to Google.
- medicare, dept of health website, PDR
- use free websites (often those listed in journal articles that result from their journal club)
- not sure what resources they are using
- subscribe to services such as UptoDate and drug related resources
- not sure what other resources
- Bing
- They are searching the internet for suppliers and to be in contact with their regular vendors
- Professional trade publications
- Unknown...many different resources used.
- CDC
- use Google when possible

When asked if free training workshops, specific to health information resources and how to search them, would be useful for, 1. nursing home staff, 61% responded "yes", and, 2. residents of the nursing home, 54% responded "no".

Would free training workshops about health information resources and how to search them be useful for, the staff of the nursing home?, the residents of the nursing home?
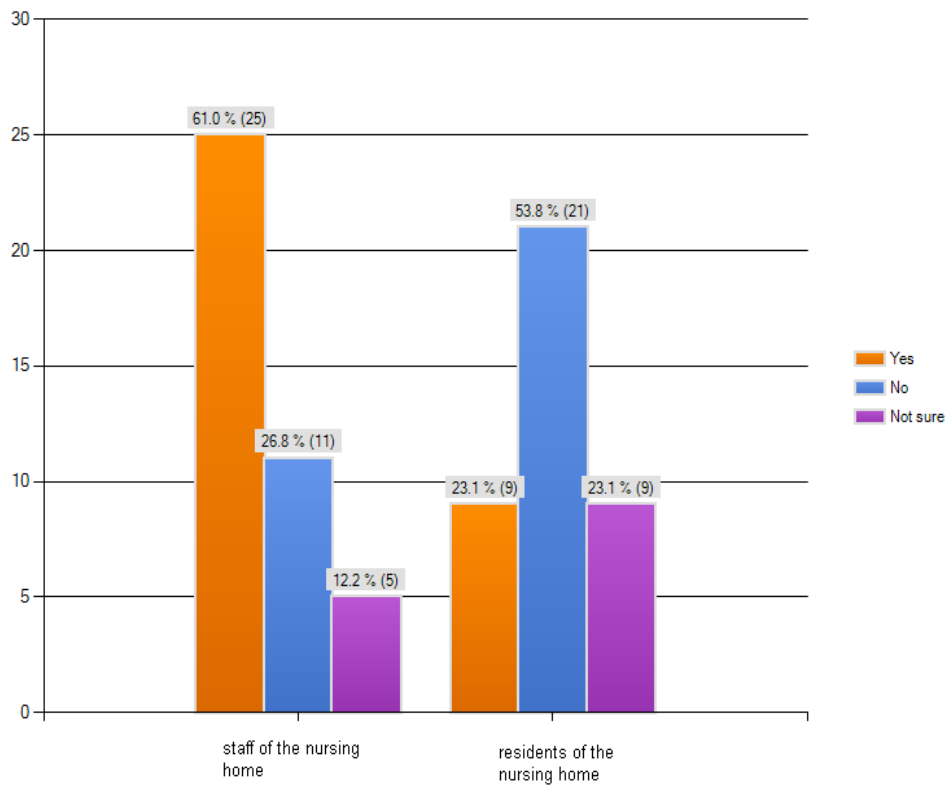
The second to last question on the questionnaire provided space for respondents to provide any final comment about their staff's use of health information. A handful of respondents provided the following comments,

- A small minority of residents would benefit - may increase with changing demographic of residents.
- WebMD is a dangerous source of drug company sponsored info wholly unbelievable
- This industry so litigious, too much information can be as harmful as not enough. Good health care is a HUMAN experience - we should not be "make-believe" or "wanna be doctors". The resident and/or resident's family gets/acquires all this information from what ever source - to discuss with a health care team member that is so bogged down with paper work they are very confused - and when things go south - the finger pointing starts.
- not all staff have Internet access
- not all staff have internet access - managers only

Thirty-four percent of the respondents, or 14 respondents, provided their contact information because they are willing to further discuss the topics of access to health information and the training needs of the nursing home staff in their institutions.

Appendix I

Needs Assessment of Unaffiliated Health Professionals in Nursing Homes – Letter and questionnaire tools

Letter:

Project: Health Information Needs of Nursing Home Staff

Dear Nursing Home Director:

We recognize the importance of health information in the quality of care provided to and patient satisfaction of residents and their families.

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM), Middle Atlantic Region (MAR) is a **federally-funded program** that aims to make **quality health information available** to health care professionals. We want to provide **free training** to health care professionals to help them use quality health information online. By health information we mean both patient education material supplied to the patient and their family, and information health care professionals use for their own knowledge such as drug information, diseases, anatomy, and more.

Please complete this short questionnaire about health information use as it pertains to your staff in the nursing home where you work. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Once we understand the interest level in free training for nursing home staff we hope to encourage partnerships with local medical librarians and public librarians to provide such opportunities for your staff.

Thank you,

Colleen Cuddy, Interim Chair and Director, New York University Health Sciences Libraries, New York University Langone Medical Center; Interim Director, NN/LM, MAR

If you have questions about this questionnaire, please contact Sue Hunter, Planning & Evaluation Coordinator, NN/LM, MAR, 1.800.338.7657, sue.hunter@med.nyu.edu

Creating a Health Information Community Serving Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania

Questionnaire:

1. In what state is the nursing home in which you work?

- Delaware
- New Jersey
- New York
- Pennsylvania

2. Does your staff use health information:

- For their own work? Yes or No or Not Sure
- To provide information to patients and their families? Yes or No or Not Sure

3. Does your staff have Internet access at work to search for health information? Yes or No or Not Sure

4. Does your staff have any difficulty finding *good quality* health information? Yes or No or Not Sure.

If YES, please describe the difficulty in finding health information:

5. Which of the following health information resources does your staff use?

- WebMD (A commercial website offering health information for the lay person.)
- MedlinePlus (A free online resource to search for full-text information on any health topic. The information is written for the lay person.)
- Google (A web search tool.)
- The staff does not use online health information resources
- PubMed (A free online resource to search for journal articles on any biomedical journal topic. If you use OVID to search MEDLINE, select this option.)
- Other: Please list any other websites or resources you use to find health information

6. Would free training workshops about health information resources and how to search them be useful for

- The staff of the nursing home? Yes or No or Not Sure
- The residents of the nursing home? Yes or No or Not Sure

7. Do you have any final comments about your staff's use of health information?

8. If you would be willing to further discuss the topics of access to health information and the training needs of your staff, please provide your contact information:

Name:
Telephone number:
Email address: